Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

# MHR Connections

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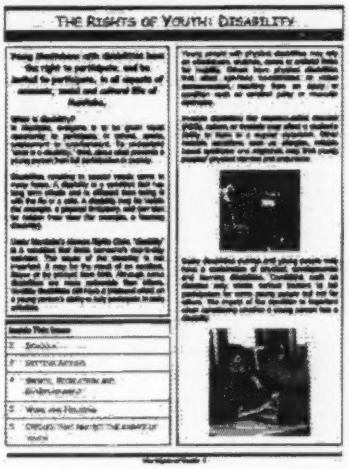



## New Rights of Youth publication encourages youth with disabilities

Young Manitobans with disabilities have the right to participate, and be invited to participate, in all aspects of economic, social, and cultural life of Manitoba. For some, however, finding the information they need, is not an easy task.

The *Rights of Youth: Disability* is a new publication which offers easy to read, practical, information for youth with mental and physical disabilities. It helps students and other youth with disabilities understand their rights and gives practical information on education, transportation, entertainment and employment.

"Putting all this practical information in one publication was the driving force behind the project," says Dianna Scarth, Executive Director of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

The publication is a joint project of The Manitoba Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Children's Advocate.

The publication was made available for the first time on April 17, 2011, Law Day at the Law Courts Building. It is the ninth in the series of Rights of Youth Publications. Other editions include *Human Rights, On the Job, You and School, Criminal Justice, Adoption, Neglect and Abuse Family Matters, and Youth in Care.*

The Rights of Youth series is also available on the following websites: www.gov.mb.ca/hrc www.ombudsman.mb.ca and www.childrensadvocate.mb.ca.

### The Rights Connection
### by Jerry Woods - Chairperson

### Learning rights and responsibilities at school

It is interesting to note that while promoting the new Manitoba Class Action human rights website, the Commission staff found out that although human rights is taught at a very early age in elementary school, when it comes to high school students, learning about individual rights and responsibilities is a little more elusive.

Some high school educators teach human rights in history or social studies classes. These lessons, although very important, focus primarily on international events and cultural diversity. Only a few students we spoke with understood their rights within Canada, never mind Manitoba.

The Commission is trying to make human rights education available to both teachers and students by offering a unique website. During its planning, we consulted with teachers and young people. What we most commonly heard was that educators need a tool that can help teach human rights, but not add more time to their already extensive workload. The students want to learn about local and national events, but not at the expense of international topics.

We listened and believe we have created a teaching tool that has accomplished this. The website is available to teachers for classroom discussions or assignments. The events covered range from the brave efforts of two Winnipeg waitresses who took their human rights fight about sexual harassment in the workplace all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada and won, to the 1988 tragic event in Burma, (now known as Myanmar), when an estimated 3,000 student protestors died at the hands of government troops.

There is also a quiz on the site, and for those teachers and students who want to examine events by categories, you can easily find topics about such areas as religion, disability or sexual orientation.

We hope that this site will help students become more involved with human rights and responsibilities, and act as a catalyst for teachers to bring these important events into the classroom.

Take a moment and check it out.

www.manitobaclassaction.com

# New workshop well received by participants

With the steady increase in the number of human rights complaints based on mental disabilities, The Commission has developed a new workshop called *Accommodation of Employees with Mental Disabilities.*

Manager of Mediation and Investigation Paula Hamilton and Investigator Tanya Buschau developed the program and the first two workshops were held last month, both receiving positive reviews. Most of those attending found the information insightful and said that the combination of advice and practical information would help them establish a policy in their workplaces.

The half-day session dealt with such topics as: what a mental disability is under *The Human Rights Code*; what your obligations as an employer are if you reasonably believe that an employee may have a mental health issue; what information is needed from medical practitioners; what the obligations of both parties are; and the benefits of having a policy on reasonable accommodation.

"Case studies make up a large part of the session", says Ms Buschau. "These real life situations help the participants better understand the unique challenges faced by employers and supervisors when accommodating employees with a mental disability."

Ms Buschau also explains that the term 'mental disability' is currently used in the workshop because that is the language used in *The Code*. "The term 'mental disability' includes mental illnesses as well as cognitive disabilities, although the focus of the workshop is on accommodating individuals with a mental illness," she says.

With the interest and high registration for the session, the Commission has decided to offer the workshop in its fall and winter schedule for 2011 and 2012. The schedule and topics for the coming workshops will be posted on the Commission's website in August.

## Alvin Law overcomes life challenges

As a result of the drug thalidomide, Alvin Law was born without arms. Law, who uses vivid imagery in telling his life story, was one of the keynote speakers at the Manitoba Teachers Society Encompassing Kids Conference. His never-give-up approach shows not how he overcame immense challenges, but how everyone can overcome their own challenges in life.

Law was given up for adoption and raised by foster parents. He learned to perform routine activities using his feet alone. He ate, dressed and groomed himself. Later he learned to drive and became active in sports and music.

Today, Alvin Law is married, a father, an accomplished musician, broadcaster, and fundraiser and owns his own communications business.

**Winston Alexander Moxam**
**August 7, 1963 - April 13, 2011**

# Human rights award winner remembered

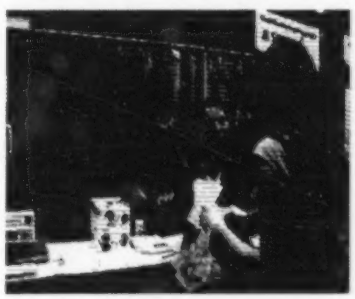
The staff of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, the Canadain Human Rights Commission and the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties are saddened by the death of Winston Washington Moxam, one of the recipients of the 2010 Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba. Mr. Moxam received the award for promoting human rights through the arts. He directed and produced the award winningWinnipeg film, *Billy.*

Winston Moxam had been working in the film industry for almost twenty years. In 1990 he wrote, produced and directed his first documentary called "From The Other Side", an exposé on minorities living on the streets of Toronto. He made Winnipeg his permanent home in 1992, where he wrote, produced and directed numerous films and videos. In 2001 Winston released his first feature film "Barbara James", which received several awards including best Canadian Feature Film at the 2002 Black Film and Video REEL film awards. In 2003 "Barbara James" was nominated for best first feature at the Pan African Film Festival.

With all the awards and recognition for his films, Winston will probably best be remembered as the Projectionist at the Winnipeg Film Group Cinematheque.

***"Moxam's characters are not pushovers. They are not helpless victims. They are resilient in the face of adversity and hold their own before a world that seeks to isolate them."***
***From the essay "From the Outside Looking In" by Matthew Rankin, published in the Winnipeg Film Group 2009 book "Place".***

## Website a hit with students and teachers



***April was a busy month for Commission staff members who have taken on the responsibility of promoting the Manitoba Class Action website. Investigator Pam Roberts explains the site to a student at the Rotary Club Career Symposium, which attracted almost 14,000 people.***

***The promotion of the site also took place at the Manitoba Law Courts Building on Law Day, the Manitoba Teacher's Society Conference: Encompassing Kids, and earlier, at the Brandon Career Symposium.***